



Naval Station Pascagoula's hometown on-line newspaper

Homeport

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Inside:

Gates returns from deployment, page 3

Hydrographic survey of harbor completed, page 7

Pascagoula celebrates Navy birthday, page 8

Photo by Stacey Byington

A word from our leaders

The President's Thanksgiving Day message

I am honored to have this opportunity to thank the brave men and women of America's Armed Forces for your service to our nation. This Thanksgiving there's much to reflect upon – and even more to be grateful for.

More than a year ago our nation was attacked, and thanks to all of you, today we find a liberated Afghanistan, and we find that the terrorists are on the run. But more work in the war against terror remains. We will root out all the terrorists who threaten America and our allies. We will not be secure as a nation until all these threats are eliminated. And no matter how



President George Bush

long it takes, we will fight the enemies of freedom, and we will win.

This Thanksgiving, we have so much to be thankful for. We are thankful for the goodness and generosity of our citizens. We are thankful for the freedom of America's democracy. And we are so very thankful to you the men and women who wear our uniform.

And thanks to our military, the people of Afghanistan live in freedom and have

hope for a better life. Thanks to you freedom is replacing fear throughout the world. And thanks to you we are bringing justice to those who would harm America.

Each and every one of you is dedicated to serving something greater than yourself. You put the protection and safety of others above your own. You are guided by a code, and you fight to bring a promise of freedom to others. I'm honored to be your commander in chief.

Happy Thanksgiving to you all. May God bless you and your families. And may God continue to bless America.

Navy stands up learning center for service support

By LT Andy Gist
Navy Supply Corps School PAO

CENTER FOR SERVICE SUPPORT, ATHENS, Ga. – One of the latest products of the Navy's Revolution in Training, the Center for Service Support (CSS), provisionally stood up operations October 1, 2002. The Navy Supply Corps School (NSCS), Athens, Ga., is the site of the new learning center, which is designed to be the knowledge manager for 16 enlisted ratings (AK/SK, DK, DM, JO, LI, LN, MS, MU, NC, NCCR, PC, PH, PN, RP, SH, YN).

The supply school's record of training excellence and focus on service oriented training, including logistics and supply, make Athens a natural fit. The CSS will

be directly responsible for the personal and professional career development of more than 46,000 enlisted Sailors in the logistics, administrative, and media ratings. The center will be responsible for developing and maintaining the highly detailed professional development continuums that define the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) Sailors must master to achieve specific career milestones. The center will also be responsible for developing and delivering the tools and opportunities Sailors need for their personal development. The center will be responsible for the curriculum, maintenance, and delivery for all training elements that currently deliver logistics, administrative, and media ratings training.

"The center is new business for NSCS, but its location in Athens is a testament to the reputation of the school as a center of excellence in Navy education and training," said CSS Commanding Officer Capt. Bob Monette, who will continue to guide the NSCS as its commanding officer as well. "I highly encourage everyone involved in these enlisted communities to go to the Website and see what we are doing and provide feedback. The revolution is for Sailors, we need Sailor input to be successful."

To learn more about the Center for Service Support and the Navy's Revolution in Training, log onto <https://www.nko.navy.mil>.

Give thanks for servicemembers

Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday dating back to our colonial times. Each November, Americans gather together family and friends to give thanks for the many blessings we enjoy as citizens of this great land.



By Gen. Richard Myers
Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff

This past year has been exceptionally poignant in realizing all that America is and will remain. We are blessed to live in a nation that values freedom and the sanctity of life. And as we rally friends and allies from around the world to eliminate terrorism, we must carry those values with us.

We should also give thanks for the brave American men and women — Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and DOD civilians — active duty and reservist alike — deployed around the world. Many are spending yet another holiday away from their homes and families. They are protecting the freedoms that every American treasures so dearly. Their dedication to duty and selfless service are truly a blessing to us all.

On this special American holiday, the Joint Chiefs of Staff join me in sending you and your families best wishes. You are in our thoughts and prayers and in those of each citizen of our Nation as well.

May God bless you and may God bless America.



Naval Station Pascagoula's hometown on-line newspaper

Homeport

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Executive Officer . . . LCDR Shri Stroud
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From our Fleet

Gates returns from successful deployment

By LTJG Denise Garcia
USS Thomas S. Gates PAO

USS *Thomas S. Gates* (CG 51) and her crew of 350, homeported in Pascagoula, Mississippi, recently returned from a successful five-and-a-half-month deployment.

Their tour at sea consisted of two separate missions -- counter drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and UNITAS, a multi-national naval training exercise off the coast of Brazil.

Gates stood to sea in early June and headed for the Panama Canal to transit to the Eastern Pacific. Once on station, *Gates* and her helicopter detachment, HSL 42, based out of Mayport, Fla., patrolled for drug-running, fast-boats headed for the United States with cocaine. They intercepted more than 2000 pounds of drugs, with a street value of more than \$43 million.

While searching for drug supply vessels and "Go-Fasts," the crew trained to remain ready to respond to any national tasking if called away from the counter-drug mission. The standard training week included anti-air, anti-surface, and undersea warfare scenarios, as well as a Naval ship's fire support scenario and a cruise missile tactical qualification scenario. They also flexed their emergency response teams with fire, helicopter crash, and man-over-board drills.

The crew was not all work and no play. Every Saturday evening they enjoyed cinema-at-sea, where a giant screen



Photo by Stacey Byington

Members of the day's duty section raise the National Ensign as the first lines are thrown to tie the USS Thomas S. Gates to its pier at Naval Station Pascagoula. The ship returned to Pascagoula Nov. 18 after a six-month deployment to the Eastern Pacific and waters off eastern South America.

was set up on the flight deck for the crew to view a movie under the open sky; and every Sunday the crew enjoyed a steel-beach picnic, with grilled burgers, ribs, hotdogs, and chicken.

To raise money for the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation fund, a \$5 donation allowed the guys to grow a beard or goatee, and the ladies to wear their hair in a ponytail. It was a very popular fund-raiser.

The biggest morale booster was the ship's mascot-puppy,

Emmy. She is a four-month-old Schnauzer-mix. She made her rounds around the ship daily, either taking a walk around the weather decks, or spending the day with one of the workcenters. She is a happy, well-tempered, people-loving animal, and a welcome addition to the crew.

While on the Pacific side, *Gates* Sailors enjoyed port visits to Panama City; Manta, Ecuador; and Lima, Peru.

Not only did they partake in all the fun liberty affords in foreign ports, but the First Class Petty Officer Association headed up two community relation projects that refurbished a retirement home and a home for abused women and children.

While in Callao, *Gates* hosted a shipboard luncheon with

the Peruvian ambassador and several other Peruvian and U.S. dignitaries.

The USS *Thomas S. Gates* returned to her homeport for two weeks in early September for a brief refueling and maintenance period. The ship stood to sea again on Sept. 2 to commence the second phase of her deployment -- UNITAS a multi-national naval exercise.

Gates along with USS *Simpson* (FFG 56), homeported in Mayport, participated in war-time scenarios with 10 ships from Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Venezuela, and Uruguay. The 12-day exercise consisted of naval battles, submarine hunts, and close-in ship-handling/formation steaming drills. Every bit of the warfare training the crew completed while patrol-

Continued on page 13

About the cover:

ET1(SW) David Miller kisses his wife, Candy, while he holds his daughter, Kaleigh, immediately following the ship's docking. Miller was one of two Gates Sailors who was the lucky recipient of the "first kiss" drawing sponsored by the ship's spouses' club.

From our Fleet

Ticonderoga hits virtual bulls-eye at sea

By COMLANTFLTPAO

GULF OF MEXICO — The Atlantic Fleet cruiser, USS Ticonderoga (CG 47), homeported in Pascagoula, Miss., successfully demonstrated the Navy's newest weapons system trainer while underway Nov. 14 in the Gulf of Mexico. The ship's test comes on the heels of successful trials Nov. 13 by the U.S. Air Force's 46th Test Wing, based at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, which dropped 18, 500 lb. non-exploding bombs from an A-10 aircraft. The Virtual At Sea Training system, or "VAST," allows war-fighters to hone their live-fire combat skills while operating at sea.

The Ticonderoga's crew successfully engaged a computer-simulated target with explosive and non-explosive ordnance shot from the ship's MK 45, 5-inch/54 caliber gun. While the rounds hit nothing but water - the demonstration was right on target.

Initial indications would suggest that the VAST system was able to successfully 'score' precisely where the ordnance rounds actually landed - a significant milestone in ensuring effective at sea combat training.

VAST is actually comprised of a system by which the ship's crew or 'spotter' sees a realistic presentation - for example, a landmass with the topography of a 'real world' target - which corresponds to an area actually located over open ocean. During training exercises, the operator fires at the simulation of what they might expect to see in combat, while the ordnance actually lands within an array of buoys in the water. Exercise evaluators, monitoring the target practice on a computer screen, could be either on board a ship or somewhere



Photo by Stacey Byington

USS Ticonderoga (CG 47) returns to its homeport at Naval Station Pascagoula after successfully demonstrating the Navy's newest weapons system trainer.

ashore.

Developed by the Office of Naval Research and tested by the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, this virtual reality training is one example of the Navy's efforts to keep its Sailors combat ready as its weapons systems become increasingly advanced. In addition to programmable targets, VAST has another distinct advantage: It is portable. Ships can take the at-sea trainer - including the firing range - with them wherever they go.

The portable 'range' is made up of several buoys that form the target area. These buoys are actually placed into the water by the ship conducting the training, in this case by the crew of the Ticonderoga. Once the ship positions itself at the proper distance from the buoy field, it engages and shoots at the virtual target. The actual ordnance then falls into this buoy field, which in turn triangulates the point of impact. The IMPASS (Integrated Maritime Acoustic Scoring And Simulator) buoy system is equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) sensors that enable the accurate triangulation of the rounds. For these initial demonstration trials, one

computer provides feedback on accuracy while a second computer is used within the ship to help with the training. In the future, a satellite uplink will potentially allow over-the-horizon operations.

As communications and satellite technology have advanced, the natural evolutionary development of weapons systems has advanced along with it. VAST is a logical next step in leveraging that technology to better train ships and aircraft that will ultimately deploy these weapons in battle.

The Air Force's 46th Test Wing used other existing systems to measure the effectiveness and accuracy of the VAST buoys during the exercise. The older systems have initially validated the emerging technology.

"While the results are preliminary, the data looks promising. We're encouraged by the capability this system brings to our testing efforts and to our pilots. It's exciting to think that we'll be able to use this portable system and convert these wide open spaces to valuable testing areas," said Col. Dennis F. Sager, of Seattle, Wash., who is the com-

manding officer of the 46th Test Wing.

Another key advantage of VAST is its training versatility. Rather than continuously firing on a static, predictable bombing range, the presentation viewed by the war-fighter can be manipulated to more closely resemble the type of terrain or target operators may face in battle. As the system develops, planners hope to incorporate models closely resembling geographic areas of interest.

While Navy officials are initially encouraged by these preliminary results, more testing is planned. Provided the concept continues to prove successful over the next six-month evaluation period, the Navy plans to invest in as many as 10 additional systems by the end of fiscal year 2003. There are currently three in the Navy's inventory being tested.

Finally, VAST offers savings in time, logistical considerations, and money when compared to live-fire ranges. Navy ships, for example, must typically travel hundreds of miles to practice Naval Gun Fire Support using live-fire ranges.

Continued on page 13

From our Fleet

Gates crewmembers rehab Brazilian school

By LTJG Ligio Cohen
NAVSOPAO

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil -- There is a unique sense of duty in the character of Sailors, who, after pulling into one of the premiere tourist destinations in the world, make it a priority to volunteer for a community relations project.

This trait is not rare among the crews of USS Thomas S. Gates and USS Simpson, who after spending more than three weeks at sea volunteered their time to help improve a Brazilian school where more than 4,000 children attend.

"We had more volunteers than we could transport," said LTJG Alyssa Farrell with the staff of Commander Destroyer Squadron 6, the echelon commander for Gates and Simpson, homeported in Pascagoula, Miss. "The 45-passenger bus was packed, and some of the volunteers had to remain standing for the ride."

At the school, the crews promptly organized in teams and distributed tasks. The goal for this visit was to paint eight classrooms and install new doors at the Municipal School Georg Pfisterer. The school, located in the heart of the popular Leblon neighborhood, is undergoing a large renovation, and the school officials were glad to receive the extra help.

"I do it (volunteer) in every port we can," said SK3 Luis Chaves, a USS Thomas S. Gates crewmember from New Orleans. "It's a great way to mingle with local people and learn about them, while the same time helping out."

Community relations projects all over Latin America are sponsored by Commander United States Forces South (COMUSNAVSO) as a way to foster friendship and understanding between U.S. service members and the communities



U.S. Navy Photo

USS Thomas S. Gates crewmembers FC3 Michael Loker and QMSN Aurora Rodriguez take a break from painting to join students playing traditional Brazilian music.

they visit. The U.S. ships visited Rio de Janeiro as part of UNITAS, the largest naval exercise in the region.

During the exercise, U.S. Sailors have the opportunity not only to sharpen their military skills and improve interoperability with neighboring naval forces, but also to become goodwill ambassadors.

"This is my first community relations project," said QM3 David Berrios, a Bronx, N.Y., native serving aboard the USS Simpson. "I became interested in participating in a community relations project because I always heard my peer's positive comments when they came back from one. I wanted to experience that same feeling."

When the volunteers took a break for lunch, they were surprised by their host's hospitality. They enjoyed a generous lunch with all the local treats and the music from the school

percussion group.

"It was great to share their food and listen to the kids play traditional Brazilian tunes," said HM3 David Garey from Queens, N.Y.

Other Sailors like QMSN Aurora Rodriguez from Homestead, Fla., and FC3 Michael Coker from San Antonio, Texas, decided to try their skills at the drums joining the musical group. After the break, the crew returned to their brushes and rollers to

complete the project.

With a new coat of paint, the classrooms became a more inviting place for the students.

At the end of the day, the Gates and Simpson Sailors had the satisfaction of a job well done and the reward of a better understanding of the rich Brazilian culture. In a country where material goods are not abundant, the keen generosity and friendliness of locals was a wonderful gift.



Welcome - Pascagoula's newest Chief Petty Officers cut the cake at the annual Khaki Ball. The ball was held Nov. 8.

From our Fleet

Decisive earns operational readiness award

By ENS Jamie Pendergrast
USCGC Decisive PAO

USCGC Decisive returned to her homeport of Pascagoula on Nov. 21, having completed Tailored Annual Cutter Training (TACT) at the Navy and Coast Guard Afloat Training Group in Mayport, Fla.

For the second year in a row, the Decisive's crew performed exceptionally well and earned four Battle "E" awards for excellence and the Operational Readiness Award.

TACT is a program that examines, trains, and certifies cutter's onboard training teams and that also tests the cutter's readiness for battle and emergency situations. During the program the crew completed more than 150 drills and exercises in navigation, seamanship, weapons systems, damage control, medical emergencies, electronics, and communications. In addition, many crewmembers attended schools in shipboard firefighting, helicopter firefighting, shipboard damage control, and rescue swimmer training.

Medium endurance cutters of Decisive's class can earn four Battle "E" Awards: Engineering Excellence, Damage Control/Medical Excellence, Operational Excellence, and Seamanship Excellence (which includes weapons systems).



U.S. Coast Guard photo

A fire team party prepares to fight a fire in the engine room of USCGC Decisive during a machinery space firefighting drill. The cutter recently returned to its homeport at Naval Station Pascagoula after completing TACT training at Mayport, Fla.

In order to earn one of the Battle "E" awards, the respective onboard training team must be certified and the average drill score for that area must be at least 90 percent. All of Decisive's training teams were certified and all required

exercises completed with an overall average score of 98 percent.

In addition to the Battle "E" awards, Decisive earned the Operational Readiness Award which is reserved for cutters that have achieved an excep-

tionally high degree of readiness and training ship-wide.

In addition to the ship-wide awards, each Decisive crew member has earned the right to wear the Coast Guard "E" ribbon in recognition of their outstanding performance.

Wildlife -- NAVSTA Pascagoula's resident alligator may be visible to people on the base jogging trail. With the days and water getting colder, the alligator may be sunning himself out of the water. DO NOT try to feed the alligator, don't get too close to it, and don't try to harass it or try to make it move by throwing things at it.



Around the Homeport

Hydrographic survey of harbor completed

By Traci Blackburn
NAVO PAO

The Naval Oceanographic Office's Fleet Survey Team (FST) and six members of the Royal Navy's Mobile Survey Team (MST) spent two weeks at Naval Station Pascagoula recently conducting hydrographic survey operations in the station harbor.

Necessity for the survey work comes from ships reporting shallower water depths than recorded on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's (NOAA) number 11375 chart from March 2001. The survey teams verified water depths and ultimately provided survey data to NOAA to potentially update the Naval Station Pascagoula portion of the chart.

Operating from a seven meter Rigid-hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) with twin-outboard engines and a 34-foot Hydrographic Survey Launch (HSL) with a three-foot draft, the team used three major components to survey the area: multi-beam sonar, differential global positioning system, and side-scan sonar (also known as "towfish"). The towfish is a four-foot long torpedo-shaped instrument, which weighs about 50-pounds. Its function is to scan sea floor from side-to-side looking for hazards to navigation and creating a picture-like image. When compiled into a mosaic, this data produces a graphic image of the bottom.

The single- and multi-beam sonars are the workhorses of FST's systems, sweeping forward with 127 beams capable of covering a wide area. The beams collect massive amounts of raw data that are translated into a visual readout of multi-colored dots, corresponding to depth soundings, on a monitor screen. Another computer program organizes those dots into



Photo by Stacey Byington

U.S. Navy Ensign Jeff Palmer, left, and Royal Navy Leading Seaman Robbie Burns work together to lower a side-scanner "towfish" into the ship turning basin at Naval Station Pascagoula. ENS Palmer is a member of the Naval Oceanographic Office's Fleet Survey Team, and Burns is a member of the Royal Navy's Mobile Survey Team. Operating the side-scan recorder is LCDR Frank Schenk, and the coxswain is Leading Seaman Phil Briggs.

a three-dimensional image of the area scanned.

For the surveyors, the ability to accurately position data is of the utmost importance. FST employs a variation of the global positioning system (GPS). GPS is a satellite based navigation system. FST uses differential GPS (DGPS), where errors are systematically determined by nearby reference stations and corrections for these errors are taken into account to perform the survey. The resulting positions can have accuracies of a few meters.

According to U.S. Navy team leader LCDR Raymond

Delgado, "Basically we are surveying and processing collected data every day to increase our turn-around time from collected data to an informational field chart. Such immediate on-scene work provides the Navy with the best possible graphic depiction of potential hazards to navigation."

The cooperative exercise including the Royal Navy officers allows an open and positive exchange of information on hydrographic survey work. Working in such joint capacity heightens the survey skills of both the FST and MST. LT

Toby Foster, lead surveyor for MST, explains that maintaining a high skill level keeps the MST ready to deploy worldwide as the UK Fleet demands.

The Naval Oceanographic Office created the Fleet Survey Team in 2000 to fill a need for fast charting of high-interest Fleet areas, to include areas where the Navy has or will have significant presence or where accuracy of current charts is questionable. The FST has completed work in Gaeta Bay and Brindisi, Italy; Apra Harbor, Guam; Kuwait City and the waters off of Ingleside, Texas.

Around the Homeport

Pascagoula celebrates Navy's 227th birthday



The head table joins the more than 300 people who attended this year's Navy Ball in a toast to the United States Navy. The ball was held at Pelican Landing in Moss Point. Seated at the head table were CAPT and Mrs. James Martin, CDR Terry Rea, Congressman Gene Taylor, and LT William Jolly. Not seen is Master of Ceremonies, LT Jon Jeffries. The meal was catered by Roussos Seafood Restaurant and Catering of Mobile, Ala.



A tradition of any birthday celebration is the cutting of the cake. Navy tradition determines that the oldest and youngest active-duty Sailors present at the ball cut the cake before it is served to guests. This year's honorees were Seaman Kali Bolten of NAVSTA Pascagoula, and FCCM(SW) Louis Harshner, command master chief of SupShip Pascagoula. The birthday cake was baked and decorated by MS1(SW) Shawn Bandy from the USS Yorktown. Although the Navy's birthday is actually Oct. 13, 1775, this year's ball commemorating the birthday was held Nov. 1.



Congressman Gene Taylor (D-Miss.), the guest speaker for the Navy Ball, tells everyone how much their service is appreciated. Taylor is the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee's Military Facilities and Installations Subcommittee.

Photos by Stacey Byington

Around the Homeport

Pascagoula commemorates Indian heritage

By JO2 Renee Johnson
Public Affairs Office

November is National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. To commemorate this event, students from Calcedeaver Elementary School, Mount Vernon, Ala., were invited to the area to perform native dances. Students at Calcedeaver are members of the Choctaw Indian tribe.

Decorated in native fancy dress attire, 10 children in kindergarten through the sixth grade, performed various authentic Native American dances including, 'Girls Northern Shawl', 'Girls Jingle', 'Boys Fancy', 'Boys Traditional', and 'Boys Grass.'

Calcedeaver students have been performing around the area for a number of years, and are widely known for their Native American dance.

Prior to each dance, Nicole Williams, the school's Native American Coordinator for the Choctaw People, described the history of the clothing worn by each student, which gave observers the opportunity to learn and gain a better insight of their culture.

"Honoring life, honoring elders, and honoring heritage," is the theme of this month's heritage commemoration.

The students who performed the native dances were handpicked because of their academic success and good behavior.

"Each of the students must be on the 'A' and 'B' honor roll before they are allowed to participate in presentations such as these," said Williams.

CDR Terry Rea, NAVSTA Pascagoula's commanding officer, welcomed the students and spoke about the tremendous impact that Native Americans have had on the United States Navy.

"American Indians have



Photo by Stacey Byington

Indian students, from Calcedeaver Elementary School on the Choctaw reservation in Alabama, perform native dances. Sponsored by NAVSTA Pascagoula's American Heritage Committee and SupShip's EEO Committee, the event helped commemorate National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month.

participated with distinction in United States military actions since before we became a free

nation," said Rea. "Five Native American Indians were awarded the Medal of Honor

during World War II, including one from Mississippi — LT Van Barfoot."

Barfoot, who was born in Edinburg, Miss., was a technical sergeant in the U.S. Army, with the 157th Infantry, 45th Infantry Division.

"Today, our Native American Sailors, Marines, and civilians continue to carry on the traditions of their ancestors — proudly serving with honor, courage and commitment, our core values," said Rea.

Native Americans have a reputation for being less educated than many others in the United States. Williams has set goals that will help elevate the education of the Indians on her reservation.

"My goal and aspirations for my people are to help them raise their standards and continue their education," said Williams, who has earned an Associates of Science degree and a bachelor degree in history.

The Choctaw reservation in Alabama is located north of Mobile, in northern Mobile County and southern Washington County.

The luncheon, held at the Tiki Restaurant in Gautier, Miss., was sponsored by NAVSTA Pascagoula's American Heritage Committee and SupShip Equal Employment Opportunity Committee.



Students from Calcedeaver Elementary School pose in native costumes. The students are all Choctaw Indians. They perform native dances in competition to promote and carry on native Indian traditions.

Photo by Stacey Byington

Around the Homeport



Veterans parade -- Sailors from a number of different commands at Naval Station Pascagoula ride aboard the USO float in the City of Pascagoula's annual Veterans' Day Parade. This is the second year that the USO float has participated in the parade.

Photo by JO2 Renee Johnson



Photo by JO2 Renee Johnson

Reenlistment -- YN1 Michelle Hubbard, NAVSTA Pascagoula's Admin leading petty officer, shows off her 'goodie package' after reenlisting for 3 more years in the Navy. LT Jon Jeffreys, NAVSTA Legal Officer, was the reenlisting official. The 'goodie package' contains several liberty chits, both for herself and members of her department. Hubbard currently has 17 years in the Navy, and was reenlisting to obligate for orders to VAW 125 in Norfolk, Va. She will be transferring in December.



Photo by JO2 Renee Johnson

Frocking -- LN1 Jacqueline Rogers receives her frocking letter from NAVSTA Pascagoula Commanding Officer, CDR Terry Rea. Others advanced off the September exam were MA1(SW) Darryl Patrick, MA1(SW) Martin Clifford, MA3 Elizabeth Davie and MA3 Anthony Lemos.

SIMA Happenings

SIMA receives SECNAV safety award

By JO2 Renee Johnson
Public Affairs Office

Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA), Pascagoula has been selected, above all the other small industrial activities in the Navy, to receive the Secretary of the Navy's annual safety award.

On hand to present the award locally was Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Connie DeWitte, who took time out of her busy schedule to come to Pascagoula. She was originally scheduled for a visit in early October, but was re-routed because of Hurricane Isadore.

DeWitte talked to SIMA Sailors during an 'all hands' meeting.

"What an achievement it is for SIMA Pascagoula to have won this award out of all the potential units in the entire Navy and Marine Corps that could have been selected," she said.

SIMA, over the last five years, has reduced its total mishap rate by 60 percent, their loss time mishap rate by 51 percent, and their off-duty sports injuries by 72 percent. They had a 36 percent increase in total jobs worked, and a 31 percent increase in their production man-hours for FY 2001.

"I congratulate you for that," said DeWitte. "One of the reasons it is such a pleasure for me to be here is because usually safety is measured by our failures, but this is a great opportunity to recognize you all for your success."

Despite a significant 40 percent decrease in staffing, SIMA Pascagoula has consistently demonstrated a loss time rate lower than the national average.

"FY 2001 was SIMA's eighth consecutive year without a government motor vehicle mishap. That is no small



Photo by JO2 Renee Johnson

Deputy Asst. Secretary of the Navy for Safety, Ms. Connie DeWitte, talks with MMI(SW) Charles Montgomery, workcenter supervisor of SIMA's pump/valve shop, as LCDR Lawrence Jones, SIMA repair officer, looks on. DeWitte toured SIMA spaces in conjunction with presenting the command with the Secretary of the Navy's Safety Award.

achievement," added DeWitte.

SIMA personnel felt not only honored to have been selected for this award, but were also honored that DeWitte, took a personal interest to present the award.

"Although she had to turn back around from her previously scheduled visit to Naval Station Pascagoula, due to hurricane Isadore, she rescheduled the presentation date in order to personally present this award. This says a lot," said LCDR Gary Thomas, SIMA's Safety Officer.

"To have direct representation from the Secretary of the Navy to present this award reinforces the importance that safety holds in the Navy," he added.

It is obvious that SIMA's

entire crew must be an active instrument in order to maximize safety, but it also helps to have a knowledgeable and experienced safety officer.

"My role, basically the safety coach, is to make sure that everyone follows the game plan," said Thomas who has worked at SIMA since 1998 and will be retiring December 13.

"I have had the privilege and honor of working with a group of outstanding professionals and leaders. I have no doubt that SIMA will continue to excel in safety and in providing exemplary service to the fleet," added Thomas.

Safety is not a separate program in the Navy, but a real indicator of how an organization works and operates.

"Being an industrial facility, we stress the importance of safety through signs throughout the building, Plan of the Week notes, and training. We ensure our personnel understand that they can be seriously injured if they do not follow the safety procedures," said LCDR Raymond Hurd, SIMA's executive officer. "It is expected that each supervisor lead by example and ensure that proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)."

Although SIMA has had a number of great successes in recent years including, the Workplace Community Service Volunteer Team of the Year 2001 award, Personal Excellence Partnership 2001 award, and Project Good

Continued on page 13

Navy, Military News

'Click it' or get a ticket campaign underway

By Navy Safety Center PAO

NORFOLK, Va. (NNS)—In an effort to stress traffic and motor vehicle risk management among military members and their families, Commander, Naval Safety Center (COMNAVSAFECEN) will partner with the National Safety Council (NSC), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Navy commands in mobilizing the "Click It or Ticket" Program.

"Click It or Ticket" is an intensive traffic law-enforcement campaign to help raise seat belt use nationwide.

The Navy is joining forces with the Marines, Army and Air Force in an attempt to reduce motor vehicle fatalities. COMNAVSAFECEN's Shore Safety Programs Directorate has launched a campaign to encourage regional commanders to adopt the "Click It or Ticket" program, as well as support other programs sponsored by NHTSA throughout the year.

The command's goal is to increase awareness of motor vehicle safety and reduce the number of needless deaths. In the last four years, the Navy has lost 317 shipmates in private motor vehicle crashes.

During FY02, 53 Sailors lost their lives to private four-wheel motor vehicle crashes. According to Safety Center analysts, 31 percent of those who died were not wearing seat belts. Based on studies conducted by NHTSA, seat belts significantly reduce fatalities by up to 45 percent in passenger cars and 60 percent in light trucks.

"We must encourage our Sailors to keep in mind that when they're off-duty, they still must exercise risk management," said Capt. Bruce Crisler, director of the Shore Safety Programs at the Safety Center.

Motor vehicle crashes are

the leading cause of death for the military.

"Our plan is to encourage regional commanders in supporting this campaign over the Thanksgiving holiday period," noted Crisler. "But to really see the impact of our safety-awareness campaign, I would like to see this program go beyond the holiday season."

In a message to the fleet, Rear Adm. Steve Turcotte, Commander of the Naval Safety Center, said, "Buckling up is easy and the best life insurance available, yet many in full view of signs requiring its use come through the gate without doing so. Safety belts are required 100 percent of the time – on base and off. It is our responsibility to ensure this requirement is enforced."

The commander calls on all leaders of every Navy command to set the example, for it is a matter of life and death. Installation commanders, security officers, public safety workers and public affairs officers can visit www.nsc.org/airbag.htm to register online, or they can download the form and fax it 202-338-0415.

Mobilization materials will also be available online at www.nhtsa.dot.gov. For more information, contact the Naval Safety Center Public Affairs Office at 757-444-3520 ext. 7312 or visit www.safetycenter.navy.mil.

The Naval Safety Center provides fleet support in aviation, afloat, shore and recreation, traffic safety, ground operations, and occupational safety and health. The command maintains a computerized repository for statistical data, conducts mishap and hazard investigations, and recommends policies that will prevent further mishaps and loss of life. Commander Naval Safety Center answers directly to the Chief of Naval Operations and



Photo by Stacey Byington

NAVSTA Safety Specialist Charles Harvey and Mississippi Highway Patrolman Sgt. Joe Gazzo remind everyone to "Click it or ticket." during the holiday driving season. It could save your life.

works closely with more than 4,200 Marine and Navy commands worldwide to promote

safety and safety processes and to preserve the lives of our service members.



Halloween -- Two children play with blow-up spiders at the MWR 'Chills and Thrills' party.

Continuing on

Gates returns from deployment ...

Continued from page 3

ling for drug runners during counter drug operations paid off during the challenging operations of UNITAS. USS *Thomas S. Gates* proved to be the leader of the pack.

Liberty ports topped off the successful exercise. *Gates* pulled into Rio De Janeiro and Salvador, Brazil, and also Aruba. While in Rio and Salvador, *Gates* hosted the U.S. Ambassador to Brazil, and a shipboard reception for all the foreign navies that participated in UNITAS.

Additionally, while in Salvador the First Class Petty Officer Association helped refurbish the interior of a schoolhouse and provided lunch for the school kids.

After five and a half months away from home, the crew returned tired, happy, and extremely well trained. USS *Thomas S. Gates* displayed America's might and resolve while operating with the South American and Spanish navies. She had a successful deployment and contributed to the proud traditions of the United States Navy. USS *Thomas S. Gates* returned to Pascagoula on Nov. 18, just in time to settle in for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.



Photo by Stacey Byington

Emmy, held by LTJG Denise Garcia, was adopted by the crew of USS Thomas S. Gates just prior to the ship's deployment. Emmy is a schnauzer-mix and had an honored place among the crew. She spent her days visiting work centers or taking walks on the weather decks.

Tico scores 'bullseye' on virtual trainer ...

Continued from page 4

This system shaves days off transiting to and from these ranges. These savings can then allow more time for crews to focus on other critical prerequisites to deploying, including other necessary training, as well as equipment maintenance and repair.

While it offers distinct advantages over other training options, VAST is designed to supplement the available ranges

used by the Navy, including ranges still required for coordinated battle group training. These types of innovations will continue to enhance the way Sailors train and prepare for combat.

"This is exciting new technology and we're encouraged with the results of joint Navy and Air Forces testing," said Adm. Robert J. Natter, Commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet,

located in Norfolk, Va. "VAST also provides tremendous flexibility in that we can train effectively wherever there is sufficient ocean space. VAST's initial testing results are positive and we see clear potential for joint Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force use of this system. Ultimately, VAST will help us further enhance the combat readiness of our ships and aircraft."

SIMA gets safety award

Continued from page 11

Neighbor Flagship award for 2002, this safety award means a lot.

"I felt proud receiving this award because it was the efforts of each individual here at SIMA that won the award," Hurd added.

The nomination package submitted by SIMA up the chain of command to the SECNAV level was 16 pages detailing the command's successes in the area of safety. At each level — Navy Region Southeast, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Chief of Naval Operations, and finally to the Secretary of the Navy, SIMA Pascagoula was determined to be the best nominee to be forwarded to the next higher level.

Categories in the package included mishap reduction, occupational safety and health training, traffic and motor vehicle safety, personal protective equipment, hearing conservation and noise abatement, sight conservation, respiratory protection, workplace inspections, recreation/athletic and home safety, community partnerships, cardiopulmonary resuscitation program, safety incentives, and new program initiatives.

"I am extremely proud of the superior effort that each SIMA sailor has made to improve the command's safety program," said Cmdr. Derrick Mitchell, SIMA's commanding officer. "This team effort has produced a safe and healthy work environment in which all personnel can be proud. Every member of my command, from the most senior officer to the most junior deck plate sailor, fully embraces the philosophy and policy of 'Safety First.'"

MWR Activities

Christmas shopping, lights displays at ITT

Naval Station Pascagoula's Morale, Welfare and Recreation department has a wide range of activities and events planned for December. They include:

Dec. 1 — Liberty trip to the shopping the malls on Airport Blvd. in Mobile. Transportation cost is \$2. Leave ITT at 8 a.m., return approximately 5 p.m. For more information call 761-2432.

Dec. 2 — Monday night football at Cracker Jack's. N.Y. Jets vs. Oakland. All you can eat hot wings for \$5.

Dec. 3 — Decorate Cyber Cafe/Liberty Center for Christmas. Share your creative ideas. Refreshments will be served beginning at 6 p.m. Participants will receive Liberty t-shirts. For more information, call Liberty at 761-2293.

Dec. 5 — Last day to purchase tickets from ITT for the Saints vs. Minnesota game at the Superdome on Dec. 8. Cost of tickets is \$31.50.

Dec. 6 — Pearl Harbor Remembrance 5K Run/Walk begins at 7 a.m. on the NAVSTA jogging trail. A trophy will be awarded to the command or department with the most participants. All participants will receive t-shirts specially designed for the event. The entry fee is \$10. Register at the gym by Dec. 4. For more information, call 761-2107.

Dec. 7 — ITT trip to Biloxi for the Christmas on the Water Boat Parade. Lighted boats will stretch from the Marina to Point Cadet. City USA Arts and Craft Show. Transportation cost is \$3. Leave ITT at 4:30 p.m. and be there for the 5:45 p.m. start. Sign up at ITT not later than Dec. 4. For more information call 761-2432.

Dec. 9 — Monday night football at Cracker Jack's. Chicago vs. Miami. All the hot wings you can eat for \$5.

Dec. 12 — Liberty Program free pizza and a comedy movie.



Magic Christmas in Lights display at Bellingrath Gardens near Mobile.

Cyber Cafe, 6 p.m.

Dec. 15 — Liberty trip to Edgewater Mall in Gulfport. Transportation cost is \$2. Leave ITT at 9 a.m., return approximately 5 p.m. For more information call 761-2432.

Dec. 6 — Monday night football at Cracker Jack's. New England vs. Tennessee. All the hot wings you can eat for \$5.

Dec. 19 — The Liberty airport shuttle service begins. The Liberty van will be available for trips to the Mobile and Gulfport airports. The 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily service will continue through Dec. 23. Liberty will provide free transportation for airport departures only. Service must be requested in advance no later than Dec. 17. Sign-up sheets are available at the Cyber Cafe and ITT. For more information, call 761-2293.

Dec. 19 — Last day to purchase tickets from ITT for the Saints vs. Carolina Panthers game at the Superdome on Dec. 29. This is the last home game of the regular season. Cost of tickets is \$31.50.

Dec. 21 — ITT trip to Bellingrath Gardens near Mobile for the Magic Christmas in Lights display. Additional attractions include music performances and holiday food. Transportation and admission

cost is \$20 for adults and \$15 for children (5-12). Leave ITT at 4 p.m. and return about 10 p.m.. Sign up at ITT not later than Dec. 17. For more information call 761-2432. If you wish to visit Bellingrath Gardens on another date, individual tickets are available at ITT. Tickets for the garden and home are \$14.75 for adults and \$10.25 for children (5-12). Tickets for the garden only are \$8 for adults and \$4.75 for children. The lights display is open to the public from 5 - 9 p.m. daily, except Christmas Day. It closes for the season on Dec. 31.

Dec. 23 — Monday Night Football at Cracker Jacks. Pittsburgh vs. Tampa Bay. All the hot wings you can eat for \$5.

Dec. 30 — Monday Night Football at Cracker Jacks. San Francisco vs. St. Louis. All the hot wings you can eat for \$5.

Dec. 31 — ITT trip to Mobile for First Night Mobile 2003. This is a family-oriented New Year's Eve party featuring more than 80 different acts. Transportation cost is \$5. Sign up at ITT no later than Dec. 20. For more information, call 761-2432.

Dec. 31 — Cracker Jacks adjusts its hours to accommodate New Year's Eve revelers.

The New Year's Eve party starts at 7 p.m. and continues to 1 a.m. New Year's Day. DJ C-Smooth will provide entertainment. The featured event of the evening is a karaoke contest. The contest winner takes home a karaoke machine. Other prizes will be given away throughout the evening.

Tickets for most activities and events are available through the Information, Tickets and Tours office, 761-2432. ITT also has tickets to Disney World, Universal Studios, Jazzland, Six Flags, Busch Gardens, Sea World, the Audubon Zoo and the Aquarium.

The Sports and Fitness Center at the gymnasium is open seven days a week and holidays. The telephone number is 761-2107. The Sports and Fitness Center also has group cycling on Tuesday and Thursday at 7:30 a.m.; ABS classes on Mondays and Wednesdays at 11:15 a.m.; Body sculpting on Mondays and Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m.; cardio-kick-boxing, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4 p.m.; circuit training on Tuesdays at 11:30 a.m.; spinning on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 a.m.; intramural football on Mondays and Wednesdays, 6-8 p.m.

The Cyber Cafe is open Monday through Friday, 4:30 - 10 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, noon to 10 p.m.

MWR's Outdoor Rental is open Mondays through Fridays, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Phone 761-2038. Paintball field is open Thursdays from 4 - 8 p.m.

Cracker Jacks is open Monday through Friday, 5- 10 p.m., and on Sundays, noon - 7 p.m.

MWR's Auto Skills Shop is open Tuesdays through Friday, 4:30 - 8:30 p.m., on Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., and on Sundays' noon - 4 p.m.